

## Maryland Acetaminophen Coalition

*A group of health care providers and advocates representing various facets of patient care in the state of Maryland working in cooperation with the Maryland Board of Pharmacy*



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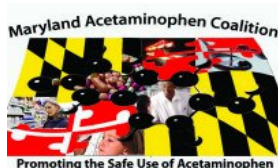
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## Information for Consumers

### Using Acetaminophen Safely to Treat Pain and Fever

Acetaminophen (a-SEET-a-MIN-o-fen) is a drug used to relieve pain, reduce fever, and reduce inflammation. It is found in many hundreds of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medicines including medicines that treat colds and flu, allergies, and sleeplessness.

**But taking too much acetaminophen can cause serious liver damage.**

#### Before you take acetaminophen:

- Make sure the other medicines you are already taking **DO NOT** contain acetaminophen. On prescription pain relievers, acetaminophen may be listed as "APAP" or "ACET."
- Acetaminophen can increase your risk of severe liver damage if you take 3 or more drinks of alcohol a day.
- Don't take acetaminophen if you are taking the blood thinner Warfarin (also known by the brand name Coumadin), as it can increase your risk of bleeding.
- Ask a doctor before using acetaminophen if you have liver disease. Acetaminophen may not be right for you.

#### To Use Acetaminophen Safely:

- Read and follow all the information on the medicine label.
- Make sure you understand:
  - how much acetaminophen you should take at one time (dose)
  - how many hours you must wait before you should take it again
  - how many times you should take it each day
  - when you should stop taking it
  - when you should talk to your doctor
- Call your doctor for help if you followed the medicine's label directions and your problem is not getting better. Taking more acetaminophen (taking a larger dose, more often, or for more days than directed) will not help and will increase your risk of liver damage. You need your doctor to help you decide what to do next.

You can develop liver damage after taking too much acetaminophen but do not know it. Symptoms may not appear for days. Or, you may mistake the symptoms of liver damage (loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting) for something else, like the flu. Liver damage can quickly develop into liver failure and you could die.

**If you take too much, don't wait.  
Get medical help right away, even if you don't feel sick.**

**For immediate help,  
call the Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222 or 911.**